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RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1079
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WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2016

TAGS: [HA](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARIANS PRESS FOR THE RECONSTITUTION OF
THE HAITIAN NATIONAL ARMY

REF: A. PAP 1514

[1](#)B. PAP 1416

[1](#)1. (U) A few parliamentarians are demanding that the 2006-2007 national budget, currently before the parliament for approval, include means for the reconstitution of the Haitian national army, an idea raised at the time the Prime Minister appeared before the Senate and Chamber of Deputies to discuss the recent rise in insecurity (ref A). The parliamentarians who support an army say that it is needed to curb the insecurity as the Haitian National Police (HNP) are unable to do so. Supporters include Senator Youri Latortue, a former member of the Haitian army and current president of the defense, justice and police commission, and Deputy Steven Benoit, president of the tourism commission and an outspoken advocate on anti-corruption (ref B) (as well as Preval's former brother-in-law). In a radio interview, Benoit argued that the Constitution provided for an army and that the budget must allocate funds for its re-establishment.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Deputy Roland Lareche (Fusion), president of the public security commission, on September 21 told poloff that he does not believe that the debate over the army will obstruct the budget process. In his opinion, &this is simply politics.⁸ In the end, other issues, like the decentralization of project funds, may prove to be larger sticking points for the passage of the national budget. According to Lareche, the country does not have the economic capacity to support an army. He agrees that an army is constitutionally mandated and would like to see one reconstituted with the help of the international community, but in the future. Lareche believes that the recreation of the army requires a larger debate outside the context of the budget because reconstitution of the army will have a large psychological impact on society. The political class was a victim of a former brutal army. He opines that an army at this moment would simply add to law enforcement problems, given that the HNP is implicated already in the security problems that grip the capitol city.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Senator Joseph Lambert, president of the Senate, agrees with Lareche. Lambert acknowledged on September 25 to poloff that "there is a popular consensus among the people. An army is reminiscent of bloody coup d'etats. While respecting the spirit of the constitution, we must find a

public security force that is neither the army nor the gendarmerie."

Biographical Information

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14. (SBU) Lareche represents the Capotille district in the North East department and has emerged as one of the chamber's more energetic and outspoken members. 37-year old Lareche is a former police officer who received some training in Michigan. He is a lawyer by training with no political background before his entry into national politics. Recently, his parents were kidnapped in Cap Haitien. He believes it was retribution for his firm stance against dialogue with Port au Prince gang members.

15. (C) Comment: Benoit and Latortue make strange bedfellows. Most assume that Latortue supports the restoration of the army as a means to continue corrupt practices he engaged in as an army officer. Benoit, who insisted to Emboffs that he is the "anti-corruption deputy," presumably believes there is political capital to be gained by beating the drum for the military. However, to date, this issue has gained little public traction and is not heavily covered by the press except for the commentary of parliamentarians. End Comment.
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